/18 cont./

428 (eits'bshakhu /see foreign text/). After the settlement for seniority and minority, all that is left is divided equally among the brothers; in addition, the youngest receives the father's house, yard, etc. Sisters receive less than brothers.

593 Kind and affable in public, the Abkhaz at home is rather stern, imperious, and so taciturn that it is as if he were too lazy, or at any rate not sufficiently inclined, to spare a single kind or friendly word for the members of his household. The Abkhaz
562 woman enjoys a great deal of freedom. She is no less busy than
462 the man; for instance, she carries the maize to the mill herself, and in some places she grinds it herself with a hand mill. In summer, she works, hoe in hand, side by side with the man in the maize-field. The wives of the members of the higher classes
[565] toil no less than their husbands, but, on the other hand, they enjoy more freedom and are held more in esteem than is the case otherwise.

562 A woman is treated with respect and esteem by young and
[535] old. Women attend community meetings, mourning rites, funeral banquets; they are present at the gatherings of the men
[579] and dance with them. There have been instances of women being the leaders of the abragi in night raids. Women perform religious rites and ceremonies. But with all this, the Abkhaz woman is expected to be innocent and modest, and to speak to older men politely and courteously.

562 If her husband divorces her without sufficient reason, the
586 Abkhaz woman has the right to appear at the village meeting and
[692] defend herself. And she skillfully uses this right: she goes to the meeting with as much determination as her husband, and defends herself with great eloquence. While the husband can divorce his wife on various grounds, she can do the same to her husband if he has done her any wrong.

/28 cont./

766 It is necessary to point out one more characteristic feature. When the head of a family dies and the sad procession has just started out for the burial-ground with his remains, a rope is thrown over his house; the ends are held by two people who pull it first one way and then the other. The meaning of this curious custom, which is also widespread in Mingrelia, is the following: with the death of the head of a family and the removal of his body to the burial-ground, the house begins to shake and threatens to collapse, and in order to avert this they have recourse to the rope. After the body has been carried out and the house remains undamaged, a rifle is fired as a sign of joy.

764 Graves for men are dug waist-deep, for women still deeper, [562] because in the opinion of certain Abkhaz, women in general are sly and cunning (paivan), and the Abkhaz proverb says, "Don't [539] tell your wife what is on your mind or she will crawl out even from her grave and divulge your secret." Therefore a deceased woman is buried deeper and covered with more earth.

When the deceased has been placed in the grave, it is rimmed with wooden boards and earth is poured in from above.

The Abkhaz do not have special burial-grounds. Each family has its own burial-ground. More often, high and mountainous places near a common road serve as burial-grounds. The tourist or traveler will easily observe that in Abkhazia the best and most poetic spots are occupied by graveyards.

765 The attention paid to the deceased continues long after his burial. The mother and the wife of the departed, his foster mother or her daughters, dressed in mourning and barefoot, visit the fresh grave every day, morning and evening, and bitterly bewail the deceased /29/ and beg him to assist them in various daily troubles, to intercede for them with other deceased persons, to give them their regards, etc. This continues up to 40 days or until the "Saturday mourning banquet." Until this time, the belongings of the deceased are displayed in the house and mourners as they arrive first weep over these belongings and then also over the grave. Likewise until this time, and often for the duration of a full year, a portion for the deceased is placed on

/49 cont./

755 782 ram or a lamb, together with loaves of bread, etc. All this is taken to the place selected, and the patient himself is led there. No women are present, for they are not [562] allowed to approach this sacred place. A venerable man, holding a candle, declares, "Great god, as is proper and as the fortune-teller has prescribed, the worshiper today stands before you; he has brought sacrificial animals and loaves of bread ... . Have mercy upon him, be merciful to him, if he has sinned before you, forgive him. I beg you to let him go from this day forward, to leave him and free him like a loosened knot." While saying these words, the venerable man moves the candle around the patient, lights it, and places it nearby. He then /50/ takes another candle [776] and prays to Michael-Gabriel. Upon the completion of this ceremony, the sick person returns home alone, while the others sit down to a meal.

One such ceremony, however, is not considered sufficient for the send-off of so eminent a guest as a god. The [796] Abkhaz is therefore obliged to repeat the ceremony annually. One day a week is set aside as a holiday in honor of that same supreme being; this day is considered such a sacred one that the house even remains unswept, etc.

19.

Aphi

776 821 Aphi (2) is the god and master of the thunder, lightning,

[113]

2. See Sborn. sveden. o kavk. gortsakh, No. V, Tiflis, 1871, pp. 15-16, article "Religioznyye verovaniye abkhaztsev /Religious beliefs of the Abkhaz/," by A. -- where, by the way, this deity is called Afy.

[782] and all atmospheric phenomena in general. The most solemn prayers in Abkhazia are offered in honor of this god.

/50 cont./

782 233 [796] On the day set for the prayer, usually at the time when the herds are driven into the mountains for the summer and when they return in autumn, the shepherds of the village break up into several groups, each group choosing a pretty spot in the forest near a brook or river. Some rams, according to the number of participants, are slaughtered, and the oldest shepherd of those departing for the mountains addresses Aphi, begging him to preserve them as well as their herd from the thunder- [562] bolts. Women and children do not dare to be present at the prayers to Aphi, and women may not even pronounce his name. When talking of Aphi, the Abkhaz usually say "khakhikal" ("the one above" or "the supreme one.")

782 731 789 During a prolonged drought, a prayer with sacrifices is offered in honor of Aphi. The best bull is chosen from the herd and a day is set for the sacrifice. The villagers bring gomi, bread, fresh cheese, and a jug of wine. The most venerable old man holds a rope fastened to the horns of the bull; removing his cap, he pronounces the following prayer, "Oh Aphi, master of thunder, lightning, and rain! have pity on your people. Our harvests have dried up, the grass is withered, our livestock perishes from want of feed, and therefore /51/ death from hunger threatens us. Command the rain-clouds to gather, command the thunder to peal, the lightning to flash, and send us rain to save the perishing people." The participants say "Amen," and the sacrificial animal is killed and its meat cooked. After all the dishes, made from ingredients brought with him, have been pre- [533] pared and laid out on mats, the old man who said the prayer repeats it, and then, with the singing of a hymn in praise of Aphi, the feast begins. This hymn is called Anchva rysshva and is sung in honor of Aphi, not only at feasts, but also [821] during thunderstorms. In the first instance, it is sung with thankfulness for the gifts that are enjoyed, in the second, to move Aphi to send good weather. During the feasts, one 782 731 574 of the elders usually addresses a speech to those present, reminding them that all they are then enjoying comes with the blessing of Aphi and suggesting that they thank him. Then

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The Megrelians also know this septenary, *shk'vit'-ul-i*, in honour of which the majority of families let loose a cow with a pierced ear. Her milk is not used for food. The bullock is offered in sacrifice, while the heifer is reared. The well-known Pshav *Kviria* is, perhaps, related to Megrelian Àyt'ar. I have pointed out above that among the Megrelians the god of cattle-breeding is called *Zhini Ant'ar*. *Ant'ar* is the Abkhasian *Àyt'ar*, while *zhini*, in Megrelian, "high," "heavenly," is equivalent to Abkhasian *khikh*. The Abkhasians, however, appear to have split up *Zhini Ant'ar* into two gods, *Àyt'ar* and *Khikh*. They appeal for help to the latter in the spring, when the cattle are taken to the mountain pastures. They pray to him under the shadows of trees. On four pillarets are placed poles, which are covered with leaves of trees, particularly of the wild hazel tree, the oak, or yoke-elm. A cheese curd wrapped in chestnut tree bark is placed on this table (*ashwamkyàt'*)* which is covered with greenery; on it is also placed *dtchamak'wa*, a kind of millet porridge, cooked with cheese. In front of it is also placed milk gruel. Women are not allowed to be present. The head of the family, standing with uncovered head in front of this green table, called *ashwamkyàt'*, prays that *Khikh*, the great part of the great deity Àyt'ar, may increase his cattle and send all good things. While praying he spills a little of the gruel towards the sea and towards the mountains, uttering *wootsw*. The prayer over, he takes the cheese curd and passes over it cross-wise a hazel "knife", which is really a stick cut into a tapering, knife-like shape, after which he actually cuts the cheese curd with a real knife.[1] This ceremony of prayer is followed by a dinner, the remains of which are not cleared away. Three of the supports or legs of *ashwamkyàt'* are cut off (each with one stroke), the fourth remains there untouched. It seems to me probable that the table itself received its name from this act of cutting. Megrelians also know this *ashwamkyàt'*, which they call *sumket* (*sumi keti*), "three sticks," derived, perhaps, from *sumkvat'*, in which case it would denote "three cuttings" (*kvat'* < *kvat'ua* = to cut, to fell), i.e. "cut with three strokes."[2]

The Georgian Mountaineers also have their *Anator-i*.

(*c*) *Alàshkintr* (*alàskintr*).

These cakes are also put aside. The prayer now takes three new

* The combination *shw* represents a labialized variety of "*sh*"; cf. "*shw*", p. 120, note *. In *ashwamkyat'* the "*sh*" is not only labialized, but also lingualized or lotized, which lingualization is not, however, represented in the transcription. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

[1] By using the wooden knife, the Abkhasian probably pays tribute to that very ancient time when his ancestors used that kind of knife.

[2] If the first part *shwam* represents the Megrelian word "three", one should keep in mind not the "K'art'lianized" form *sumi*, but the original, Tubal-Kainian *shumi*; see Marr, *From the Journies to Seanie* (in Russian), in *Khrist. Vostok*, ii, pp. 17–18. (Editor, *Khrist. Vost.*)

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guardians, whose power extends to his descendants, but not to those of his brothers or sisters. In the village of Adzvibzha almost everyone is obliged to carry out this " praying to God ", Christians as well as Muhammadans.

Every Abkhaz keeps in his cellar, in honour of " God ", a special pitcher filled with must of the very best grade. However great his need, an Abkhaz will not, for any consideration in the world, open this " sacrificial " pitcher until the celebration of the cult of " praying to God ".[1] Early in the morning, on returning from the church, the head of the family surrounded by the male members of his household, sacrifices a young he-goat over the " sacrificial " pitcher, and entreats " the great God to receive graciously the humble offering made by him in accordance with the instructions of his forefathers . . ." He humbly entreats the Great God " punish us not for our faults and trespasses ", etc. After this the meat of the immolated goat is boiled, and sacrificial wheat-cakes are baked. All this is taken down into the cellar, and placed in front of the sacrificial pitcher. The members of the family kneel down, while the head of the family reverently cleans and opens the pitcher, and, holding in his left hand a hazel stick upon which the heart and liver of the goat are transfixed, he prays *Antwza-du* (to great God) that He grant him and his family a long and happy life. In his prayer he never fails to mention that they are performing the rite " in the manner they were taught by their fathers and grandfathers ". Afterwards he fills a glass with wine from the pitcher and pours it on the heart and liver and the sacrificial cakes; he then passes the latter, with the wine, three times over the heads of the supplicants who are kneeling down, and says: " Grant us the warmth of Thine eyes and of Thine heart! Protect us from all infirmities and sickness." Then follows again the libation of wine Now they all rise, turn round from right to left, and each places a piece of frankincense on burning coals. For a few minutes they all stand still humbly, while the great God " receives " their offerings, and then, with strict observation of order of seniority, a glass of wine and a small piece of the heart and liver is given to each of the participants. It should be noted that only the household members are allowed to partake of these sacrificial offerings. Even the married daughters of the family are treated as strangers, and they are not allowed to share in the offerings with their husbands and children. It is sinful even to think of the sale of the wine. In most of the families the female sex is generally forbidden to partake of this offering.

Thus do the Abkhasians perform annually the domestic offering to God of " His share ". But every three to five years each Abkhaz

[1] The same applies to other " sacrificial pitchers " referred to below.

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is obliged to present "His share" (offering) to God, in a forest, for which purpose a clearing is chosen under the shadow of a tree, oak or yoke-elm. Here is offered usually a castrated goat the age of which is equal to the number of years since the Abkhaz last prayed in the forest. Women are not allowed to take part in this rite, although they help to prepare the sacrificial cakes. The prayer is said by the elder of the *grari*, who receives the hide of the immolated animal. The offering takes place in front of *ashwamkydi'* (described above). The prayer ceremonial is the same as in the case of the domestic offering, although the pitcher of wine kept in the cellar is not used; for the purpose of the oblation a little wine is brought in a smaller pitcher. All the men in the neighbourhood participate in the ceremony, and when it is over they seat themselves on the grass; herbage is placed in front of them, and on this is served the dinner. A small piece of the heart and liver of the immolated animal is given to each of the participants. All the sacrificial food must be consumed on the spot; nothing may be taken home. The horns of the victim are hung high above the *ashwamkydi'* and left there. Three legs of *ashwamkydi'* are then cut, and the assembly disperses.

Some families dedicate to *Antswahwə* cows which are let loose with perforated ears (see above, p. 125); these cows are called *adzatwə*, which is difficult to translate; it apparently denotes "pledge", "security". Bullocks born of these cows are offered in sacrifice in place of castrated goats.

(*b*) *Aylər-nəkha.*

On the same day, simultaneously with *Antswakhwə*, a sacrifice is offered to *Aylər-nəkha* (*Ilər-nəkha*). The ceremony of offering the sacrifice is exactly similar to that described above. There is the same "wine pitcher", goat, cakes, and the same manner of praying. Also, at certain intervals, the sacrifice is made in the woods, in the manner described above. Many keep *adzatw* cows in honour of the Ilori icon. The only difference being that women have a freer access to these offerings than to *Antswakhwə*. Here I will note that if the pitcher for the "sacrificial wine" becomes in any way damaged (even if only slightly chipped), a new one, larger and dearer, must be substituted without fail. This is a general rule for all pitchers of this kind.

*Aylər-nəkha* (*Ilər-nəkha*) denotes the "icon of Ilori". This appears to be the same icon of St. George, which is kept in the small, walled-in church of the village of Ilori. This village is situated on the seashore, three miles from Otchemtchire. What is this Ilori icon? Which saint does it represent? For what is this saint remarkable? The contemporary Abkhaz has no notion whatever. The masses do not know to this day that it is the image of St. George. All they know

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who transgress against him. In order to avoid incurring the anger of this god, an Abkhaz will not draw water or wash himself when the rainbow is in the sky, and is generally careful about the use of water. Like any other god, *Àtswaqwa* may bestow the " warmth of his eyes and his heart ", in return for offerings and prayers. Whoever is affected by his wrath, grows icteritious, emaciated, to save his life he must, at the direction of the sorceresses, make the following offering to the rainbow god :—

On one of the Thursdays [1] the old (" pure ") women take the sick person to the river, pass (Geo. *shemoavleben*) around his head 4–5 yards of variegated chintz, and pray : " The great god ! Acknowledging his transgressions this sick person (the name is mentioned) has appeared before thee, and humbly entreats thee to accept this chintz as a pledge that he will perform the established offering at the proper time, at the direction of the sorceresses ! "

On the following Thursday he is taken again to the same river and place. Usually three women say the prayer, but there may be seven. Men, with the exception of the patient, are not allowed to be present at this ceremony. The sick person is dressed entirely in white. The eldest woman [2] kills a capon and a hen ; women carry out all the duties, preparing *ashwamkyàt'*, " *ghomi* " (millet pudding), *akwakwàr*, and *atcha-gvazàl* (Geo. *ghvezeli*, an oblong bread), of each of which there must be seven of the usual, and seven of the very small size. All these are placed on *ashwamkyàt'*, on which also burn seven wax candles. The prayer is said by the eldest woman. The patient kneels in front of the offering ; he is taken home immediately the ceremony is over, and he must not look back. The seven small *akwakwàr*, *atcha-gvazàl*, and seven small portions of *ghomi* (*abòst'a*—millet porridge), are thrown into the water ; they represent the share of the female slaves (*aht'ap'hwòs*) of the rainbow god. Everything else is consumed by the women themselves ; the remains being thrown into the river, for nothing must be taken home.

Muhammadans must also burn candles at this offering. The candles are fixed on a kind of hoop made of grape vine. At the end of the ceremony the hoop with the burning candles is thrown into the river.

It should be noted that in some parts of the country this god is called *Àtswaqwa-òlia* (the Rainbow-Eliah). So at least he was called, according to the testimony of D. I. Gulia, by Javaz, the famous woman supplicant.

[1] Thursday in Megrelian is *tsaxàlia*, the day of the sky. It is noteworthy that the Abkhasians perform usually on the day of the sky, the majority of rites that are seemingly connected with the sky, as in the case given.

[2] The Abkhasian women kill animals only on occasions of certain offerings.